

McDERMOTT'S "EXILES"

BY "CRUX."



INCE the appearance of last week's issue I have received a very special and urgent request coming from a quarter that I cannot for a moment ignore. It will be recalled that in closing the gleanings of Christmas verses, I quoted the opening stanza of Martin McDermott's poem the "Exiles far away." I have been asked to give the readers the balance of that unique and beautiful production. It is with the greatest pleasure that I accede to that request. But, as I have a certain space at my disposal each week, I will take advantage of it to do more than I have been asked. I will preface the poem by a few remarks that I consider pertinent to the subject. The name of Martin McDermott is little known to-day, nor was he ever much known to the public. Yet he was one of the sweetest singers that the "young Ireland" movement, of the forties, produced. He did not write much, but what he did write bears the unmistakable impress of genius. It was in 1848-49 that his productions appeared in the "Nation." Consequently nearly sixty years have passed away since he wrote. We can reasonably conclude that he was then, at least, twenty years of age, if not more. That would leave him, if still alive, over eighty years of life. I say, "if still alive," for I do not know whether he is still in the land of the living or not. About ten years ago I remember reading in an American paper, I now forget which one, that Mr. Martin McDermott, the Irish poet, was ill in Boston. To me that piece of news was a revelation, for I had long before considered him as amongst the departed. But whether dead or alive, it is certain that he published only a few of his poems, and the few that he thus bequeathed to Irish literature will bear comparison with anything written in the English language during the nineteenth century.

In order to understand how it is that McDermott's name has been somewhat neglected in the story of Irish poetry of modern times, we must consider the circumstances under which he wrote. The genius of O'Connell had won emancipation and the giant of Irish eloquence was nearing the sunset of his career; a new spirit had come into Ireland, an aggressive and educational one, with the advent of the "Nation." Of poetry there was a flood and it was all genuine and inspiring. The keynote was given by Davis and from all sides came bards, any one of whom would have sufficed to immortalize a decade of national history. Duffy, Mangan, McCarthy, Williams, Lady Wilde, Edward Walsh, Dr. Waller, Supple, Simmons, Mrs. Norton, McGee, John Fisher Murray, Rev. Dr. Murray, W. P. Mulvihock, Rev. C. Meehan, Neil McDevitt, Dr. Maginn, Mary Eva Kelly, "Mary of the Nation," John Keegan, T. Irwin, John Frazer, Samuel Ferguson, Lady Dufferin, Dr. Drennan, Bartholomew Dowling, Aubrey De Vere, Francis Davis—"the Belfast Man," Crofton Croker, J. J. Callanan, Col. Blacker, M. J. Barry, John Banim; not to speak of the still vibrating songs of Moore and Griffin; add to this very imperfect list the scores of exquisite writers who wrote over noms-de-plume, such as "Eva," "Conacensis," "Sulmalia," "Una," "Miro," "Finola," "Carroll Malone," "Pontiac," "Myloach," "Feardans," "Tiny," "Mac Duach," "Eirie," and a number of others, and you may form an idea of how very slight a chance there was for a half dozen of poems, written over an adopted signature, to be widely known. If I am not mistaken, Martin McDermott adopted the word "Sieve-gullion" in signing his poems. This, also, was calculated to hide the name and consequently curtail the deserved fame of the writer.

I will now reproduce his poem of the Exiles in full, and will follow it with another sample of his work. A bard of his beautiful expression and tender feeling should certainly not be neglected; and I was gratified, for his sake, when I found that the few lines quoted last week had made a sufficient impression on a reader, to induce him to ask for the entire poem.

THE EXILES.

When round the festive Christmas board, Or by the Christmas hearth,

That glorious mingled draught is poured Wine, melody, and mirth! When friends long absent tell, low-toned, Their joys and sorrows o'er, And hand grasps hand, and eyelids fill, And lips meet lips once more— O! in that hour 'twere kindly done, Some woman's voice would say— "Forget not those who're sad to-night,— Poor exiles far away!" Alas, for them! this morning's sun So many a moist eye pour Its gushing love, with longings vain, The waste Atlantic o'er, And when he turned his lion-eye The evening in the West, The Indian shores were lined with those Who watched his couched crest; But not to share his glory, then, Or gladden in his ray, They bent their gaze upon his path— Those exiles, far away!

It was—O! how the heart will cheat! Because they thought beyond His glowing couch lay that Green Isle Of which their hearts were fond; And fancy brought old scenes of home Into each welling eye, And thro' each breast pour'd many a thought That filled it like a sigh! 'Twas then—'twas then, all warm with love, They knelt them down to pray For Irish homes and kith and kin— Poor exiles far away!

And then the mother blest her son, The lover blest the maid, And then the soldier was a child, And then the student's pallid cheek Flushed red as summer rose, And patriot souls forgot their grief To weep for Erin's woes; And, O! but then warm vows were breathed, That come what might or may, They'd right the suffering Isle they loved— Those exiles, far away!

And some there were around the board, Like loving brothers met, The few and fond and joyous hearts That never can forget; They pledged—"The girls we left at home, God bless them!" and they gave, "The memory of our absent friends, The tender and the brave!" Then, up, erect, with nine times nine— Hip, hip, hip,—hurrah!" Drank—"Erin slanthea gal go bragh!" Those exiles, far away.

Then, O! to hear the sweet old strains Of Irish music rise, Like gushing memories of home, Beneath far foreign skies, Beneath the spreading calabash, Beneath the trellised vine, The bright Italian myrtle bower, Or dark Canadian pine— O! don't those old familiar tones— Now sad, and now so gay— Speak to your very, very hearts— Poor exiles, far away!

But, Heavens! how many sleep afar, All heedless of these strains, Tired wanderers! who sought repose Through Europe's dreary plains— In strong, fierce, headlong fight they fell— As ships go down in storms— They fell—and human whirlwinds Swept across their shattered forms! No shroud, but glory, wrapt them round; Nor prayer, nor tear had they— Save the wandering winds and the heavy clouds— Poor exiles, far away!

And might the singer claim a sigh, He, too, could tell how 'twere Upon the stranger's dreary shore, His heart's best hopes were lost; How he, too, pined, to hear the tones Of friendship greet his ear, And pined to walk the river side, To youthful musings dear, And pined, with yearning silent love, Amongst his own to stay— Alas! it is so sad to be An exile far away!

It is evident from the last stanza of this poem that the poet was in America when he wrote it. I have selected another of his beautiful productions, as an additional illustration of his talent, and it also seems to be a personal experience written in exile. The title of the poem is "The Coolun"—the name of one of the most touching of Ireland's ancient melodies. The Avonmore, mentioned in the first line, is the Munster Blackwater. It seems to me, as it has seemed from my childhood, that this poem is one of the most graphic, and perfect descriptions of the class that has ever been penned. Read it closely, ponder over each stanza, and I am convinced that you will agree with me that few are the poems in English that afford as fine an idea of Irish patriotic sentiment. When a child, I have sat on the knee of my old Irish nurse, and have wept with a delicious pain, as she would sing to me the mournful "Coolun;" and when I grew older, and the aged woman had gone to her eternal repose, I would often sit, in the evening of a summer day, under the very tree in the lawn where she and I used to sit six years before, and I would read over and over McDermott's "Coolun," until every word of it sank into my heart. If bard could ask for greater tribute to the power of his song I am unable to conceive it. It is thus the poem runs:—

THE COOLUN.

The scene is beside where the Avonmore flows— 'Tis the spring of the year, and the day's near its close; And an old woman sits with a boy on her knee— She smiles like the evening, and he like the lea! Her hair is as white as the flax ere it's spun— His brow as yon tree that is hiding the sun! Beside the bright river— The calm, glassy river, That's sliding and gliding all peacefully on.

"Come, granny," the boy says, "you'll sing me, I know, The beautiful Coolun, so sweet and so low; For I love its soft notes more than blackbird or thrush, Though often the tears in a shower well gush From my eyes when I hear it. Dear granny, say why, When my heart's full of pleasure, I sob and I cry To hear the sweet Coolun— The beautiful Coolun— An angel first sang it above in the sky!"

And she sings and he listens; but many years pass, And the old woman sleeps 'neath the chapel-yard grass; And a couple are seated upon the same stone, Where the boy sat and listened so oft to the crone— 'Tis the boy—'tis the man— and he says, while he sighs, To the girl at his side with the love-streaming eyes, O! sing me, sweet Oonagh, My beautiful Oonagh, O! sing me the "Coolun," he says, and he sighs.

"That air, mo stor, brings back the days of my youth, That flowed like the river there, sunny and smooth! And it brings back the old woman, kindly and dear— If her spirit, dear Oonagh, is hovering near, 'Twill glad her to hear the old melody rise Warm, warm, on the wings of our love and our sighs— O! sing me the Coolun, The beautiful Coolun!" Is't the dew or a tear-drop is moistening his eyes?

There's a change on the scene, far more grand, far less fair— By the broad rolling Hudson are seated the pair; And the dark hemlock-fir waves its branches above, As they sigh for their land, as they murmur their love; Hush! the heart hath been touched, and its musical strings Vibrate into song—'tis the Coolun she sings— The home-sighing Coolun, The love-breathing Coolun— The well of all memory's deep-flowing springs.

They think of the bright stream they sat down beside, When he was a bridegroom and she was his bride; The pulses of youth seem to throb in the strain— Old faces, long vanished, look kindly again— Kind voices float round them, and grand hills are near, Their feet have not touched, ah, this many a year—

And, as ceases the Coolun, The home-loving Coolun, Not the air, but their native land faints on the ear.

Long in silence they weep, with hand clasped in hand— Then to God send up prayers for the far-off Old Land; And while grateful to Him for the blessings He's sent— They know 'tis His hand that withholdeth content— For the Exile and Christian must ever more sigh For the home upon earth and the home in the sky— So they sing the sweet Coolun The sorrowful Coolun, That murmurs of both homes—they sing and they sigh.

Heaven bless thee, Old Bard, in whose bosom were nursed Emotions that into such melody burst! Be thy gave ever green!— may the softest of showers And brightest of beams nurse its grass and its flowers— Oft, oft, be it moist with the tear-drop of love, And may angels watch round thee, forever above! Old Bard of the Coolun, The beautiful Coolun, That's sobbing, like Erin, with Sorrow and Love.

I have encroached considerably on space, but it seems to me that what I have given will plead an excuse for me. I could go on for columns with the poems of McDermott, each lovelier than the other, all so full of pathos, so sincerely true, so intensely Irish, so heart-stirring, so noble. The other day a gentleman of considerable reading told me that he knew all about the Irish poets—he had read Moore, Mangan, and a small collection of scattered pieces by half a dozen of poets. Poor man! he does not know the A. B. C. of Ireland's poetic contributions to English literature. Why, Hayes' collection of Irish Ballads covers seven hundred and thirty very closely printed, small type, pages, and the two volumes do not give more than a third of the poems of each author—in some cases not the tenth. And the ninety-six poets, from whom the collector gleaned, form about the third of the important Irish writers of verse. As well might the man who has read a few poems or pieces by Racine, Lamartine and Beranger, tell me that he is thoroughly conversant with French poetry. I might write until I am twenty years older, and write without one moment's interruption, and I would not have consigned to paper all I could say on the subject, and yet I have never got beyond the vestibule in the temple of Irish literature.

A Missionary's Experience In Lapland.

Rev. F. Hartmann, under date, Christians, Oct. 15, 1902, writing to several American Catholic exchanges, says:—

I write from the icy depths of Lapland. It is winter. Not the winter we have had the past few months here when snow and ice are as common in August as they are in January in the temperate zones, but winter in the true sense of the word. The sun has just set, not to be seen again for many months, and the long "midnight" with its gruesome gloom is on. Snow is falling in columns. A howling, blustering squall seems gaining with every hour to rive and shatter the mountain rocks to their very base.

In the presence of this unearthly cold and darkness, among a starving race of human beings to whom the flashes of the Northern Light are terrifying, not wonderful, the only guide of the devoted missionary is the light of his faith.

But this is just the acceptable time for the missionary. The powers of the elements are overwhelming in more than one respect. Moreover, immediately after the winter the Lap leaves his winter quarters, and, assisted by his reindeer, sleighs off towards the fords, or the ocean coast, or on a walrus or bear hunt. After the season he returns to his winter roost. For nine months of the year the Laps are nomadic. Our Catholics among them are so different from their countrymen. The faithful reindeer is always on hand. Let us take a trip through some of these settlements. Our animal is unruly at times; never treacherous. Not even the experienced Norwegians ever succeed in fully

training the reindeer. They must frequently depend upon their dogs and small bears to assist them in subduing the proverbial reindeer temper.

Of course your outfit must be of fur from head to foot; the cold, particularly in the mountain districts, is not to be trifled with. Now a flask of good Cognac is as important as your furs. The Laps' sleigh contrasted with the more Southern article looks rather like an improvised device. It is hewn out of a tree trunk, and is never large enough to accommodate more than one person. We must be provided.

The missionary will need an additional one for his portable altar and another for his baggage. Once seated be sure that the reins are well secured to your person, never under any consideration must you relinquish them, for once beyond your check the poor animal will start into a mad dash always more northward into the snowbound weird wilds until you are lost among the most ferocious beasts of the Arctic regions.

Now ready for the trip. Though 11 a.m. by the clock, the moon is in all her glory. The few patches of plains to the right and the left covered with stumps and stunted shrubs soon disappear to give place to terrible heights and tremendous rocks until your journey is viciously punctuated by thundering cliffs and howling precipices. Ever forward and upward we tear, and ever steeper and more daring the path. On the right the gaping deep of eternal ice; a towering wall of solid granite threatening to the left and overhead. One misstep of our animals and we are lost. But they know neither fear nor danger, and you are as secure as you would be on the sidewalks of Broadway, New York. But the solitude would make you shudder; not a tree in sight, no shrub, nor even the suggestion of a blade of grass, no living being of any description. Nothing save the occasional footprints of the wolf or the fox whose hunger howls may often be heard through the thrilling darkness.

Thus we speed on for hours and days together. Our clothes are an armor of ice and snow. Only with effort can we control our eyes and mouths whose closing may be fatal at any time.

What is the strange sound! A dog! we are nearing a settlement! A little while and we see the anxious Lap waving us a welcome to his little home. He is a Catholic; our messenger has told him of our coming.

Greeting and reception is most cordial, but very unlike our experience in Caucasian countries. We do not shake hands—they must not under any consideration be taken from our mitts. We meet back to back and mutually tap the others' shoulders. This is a la Laps. The Eskimo mother also approaches with her husband in dappled silks and furs to greet us.

We enter the hut and are at once served with coffee. There is no table. The cups are passed around as we sit by the fire place. The sugar follows in strange fashion; the good mistress leads by biting her share from an ungainly looking lump and passes the rest to her neighbor that he may do likewise. So every guest helps himself to sugar. It would not be well to hesitate or object to this ceremony, my Lady will save you the trouble, and bite off a piece for you, with the suggestion to make yourself at home. Next comes a fresh frozen reindeer roast and reindeer tongue. This is a concoction of which alone the Lap can speak. The parts are mixed and seasoned in a reindeer's stomach, well iced and served in chips. It is not a palatable dish by any means, but yet very strengthening.

Dinner over, the feast really starts. An animated conversation begins; every imaginable story, true, possible, or probable is hurried into entertainment. Questions without limit are in all sorts of order. Their troubles, hardships, fears and pleasures are freely commented upon. It is only toward the small hours of the morning that our Laps are induced to think of rest. And now the wolf fur that so far served as seat, in turn serves as a couch. On the morrow the mission begins with the holy sacrifice of the Mass, offered upon the portable altar near the fire. After devotions the family assists at religious instructions and explanation of the catechism. It is so consoling to see how much of our past visits remains treasured up in the minds of these poor benighted people. Their life puts many even well educated people to shame. Naturally many of the less familiar doctrines are distorted with them owing to the want of grounding explanation. But, when everything is considered, their knowledge of essential doctrines is amazing.

Confession follows instruction and on the succeeding morning the mission

family approach the Holy Table. Next comes an hour's devotion to the Sacred Heart to whom our entire mission is consecrated and upon whom we look for grace, strength and blessing.

With words of advice and further encouragement we leave them to head for the next station.

Archbishop Keane and Socialism

Speaking recently on the above subject, Archbishop Keane said:—"When I look about me and note on every hand the evidences of the rapid growth of Socialism, I am appalled and can scarcely credit my own senses. For it is only a few years ago that it seemed to me there never could be room or occasion for the growth of Socialism on this free American soil, where men are equal before the law and when opportunity seems boundless and limitless. And yet to-day Socialism is growing, and growing rapidly."

Alcoholism in France.

A medical organ called "Good Health," makes reference to a striking article that recently appeared in the "Annales d'Hygiene," on the subject of "Alcoholism and Crime."

That article says:—"The writer calls attention to the fact that the official statistics of the police court of Paris show that for several years past there has been a rapid increase in juvenile criminality. Even among murderers there is found a large percentage of young people, some almost children. This increase of juvenile crime is charged to alcohol, which has been shown to act, not only directly, but indirectly, through heredity. Alcoholic insanity is increasing with great rapidity in Paris. Alcohol is perhaps more active than any other agent in producing human degeneracy, and is one of the most direct and potent causes of criminality and insanity. The children of drunkards are very liable to be epileptic and idiotic, as well as criminal. The children of alcohol-drinking parents, when young, do not appear different from other children, but about the age of puberty their criminal instincts begin to manifest themselves. Careful observations have shown again and again that there is an intimate relation between diet and alcoholism; especially that tea, coffee, and condiments lead to the use of alcohol. It has also been demonstrated that flesh-eating creates a thirst for alcoholic beverages and an appetite for tobacco, the use of which almost invariably leads, sooner or later, to the use of alcohol in one form or another."

Here we have a very pointed statement regarding the fearful results of alcohol. However, we are somewhat inclined to dispute the closing propositions of the author. We have no evidence from experience that the eating of flesh meat leads to alcoholic drinking. On the contrary, meat is a support to the system; and it is the weak, or run-down system that is most liable to crave for stimulant to revive, or to apparently fortify it. Again we cannot agree that the use of tobacco "almost invariably leads, sooner or later, to the use of alcohol in one form or another." We have known men, who have been habitual and strong smokers during nearly all their lives, to have never tasted a drop of alcohol, and to have never felt any temptation in that direction. While we admit that alcoholism is the mother of countless crimes, we cannot agree that the eating of meat or the smoking of tobacco is the parent of alcoholism.

We do not make these remarks, either in defense of tobacco, or as an excuse for alcoholism. We simply wish to point out that zeal in a good cause may often cause one to overstep the mark, to exaggerate unintentionally, and to consequently weaken an otherwise strong argument. There is no legitimate means that could be suggested as a remedy for the alcoholic evil that we would not most gladly adopt and advocate; but we do not believe in spoiling a cause, that has so many strong points in its favor, by adducing evidence that is not of a solid nature.

"NO SEAT, NO PAY," is the slogan of the Car Passengers' Rights Society. Every car passenger is to have a seat in New York, or the women of that city intend to know the reason why. The society is not an ephemeral institution that will sink back into obscurity after a few weeks, but a chartered organization of New York's wealthiest and most influential women.

once played low strange an are never e Church as a ment, nor to sterious suc- er perpetuity promise that ay when He e with that f time. hat, without n men as Dr. e in the Cath- more wonder- ingenuity and t know how elation of the d of her posi- tieth century, of Divine in a her founda- y hangs over ute to her. It ord of Christ e true, and no hereof than the ot to speak ngth of the t olden Church etual testimo- d and spiritual survival during and centuries fficient proof possibly have n origin. To ould be the city. And still liberal-minded e true reason eableness and ly to be hoped nly when they e the Church, itical engine of p, but as the

READERS.

se stamps for ue Witness," is- onth. I wish I s to that lovely ound to my ny of them Pro- ire the papers, d every word e they do."

ntfully, E. M. L.

nclosed the sum e renewal of my "True Witness." late you on the e you have made s." It is more ructive than ever

Longevity

report of the b- uties of the United e Irish lead all in this country ongevity. Of the rarians in the census man sets as Irish, 16.4 per cent. as English, anese and 1 per cent. In 1900 there e in the United e 00 years of age, may not seem pa- e as an indication when it is placed at puts our popu- 00, but it means her different when gives us twice as s there are in id, France, Scot- with a combined 250,000. Almost centenarians are e most important eed from the com- is that which are more centen- g in this country e, and the natural average length of undaries is appre-

NIGHT REFUGE.

ending Sunday, 2— Males 285, fe- 161, French 92, ch and other na- tional 270.

greater than the he less said about a better.